

# Review of Community Health Advisory Board (CHAB) Activities From June 2009 – To September 2009

Submitted to the Island County Board of Health  
21 September 2009

## 1) Priority Health Issues.

### a. Chronic Disease and Physical Activity.

(1) Background. Chronic diseases affect a significant proportion of our community.

These conditions are caused by a variety of factors, and can be influenced by a number of others. As members of CHAB reviewed the data available on our community's health, it became apparent that a number of chronic conditions were or could be influenced by a few underlying factors. These factors could, in turn, be influenced by actions that could be taken by county and city governments, by non-governmental organizations, and by individuals. Conditions such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes, for example, are affected by the amount of exercise that individuals get in the course of their daily living, by the choices of foods included in their diets, and by other lifestyle choices.

The Health Action Team (HAT) for this issue is working to develop one or more efforts to address (1) increasing exercise options for both children and adults, (2) providing healthy alternatives for lunch and snacks in schools, and (3) reducing smoking by pregnant women and their families.

(2) Recent Accomplishments/Progress. Island County Public Health recently received a multi-agency grant to obtain training and develop an action plan to help the county become an ACHIEVE community – that is, an Action Community for Health, Innovation and Environmental Change. The focus of this grant is on physical activity, nutrition, tobacco cessation, obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease. This effort was initiated this past Spring and is continuing, with members of the CHAB participating.

The Chronic Disease and Physical Activity Health Action Team (HAT) has reviewed the ACHIEVE initiative and determined that this funded activity addresses the priority issues identified in the CHAB community health assessment. As a consequence, the HAT has disbanded and its members are participating in the ACHIEVE effort and/or other CHAB priority efforts.

### b. Communicable Disease.

(1) Background. Vaccines and antibiotics are available to prevent and treat most communicable diseases, but these diseases continue to affect the people of Island County – with the most recent example locally being the pertussis (aka whooping cough) outbreak of Summer/Fall 2008. This example has now been reinforced at the national and global level by the “swine flu” epidemic. The available vaccines and treatments are effective only if those who need them know of their availability and are willing to use them. As members of CHAB reviewed the data on the community's health and supplemental briefings from the Island County Health Department (ICHHD) staff, it became evident that a key factor in preventing disease outbreaks was communicating to the community. While the ICHHD is the leader locally in communicating about the risks from communicable diseases and how to reduce

them, the HAT for this priority health issue is exploring whether the CHAB can assist and is working to identify whether there are specific functions which the CHAB can support.

(2) Recent Accomplishments/Progress. The subcommittee focusing on sexually transmitted infections (STIs) will be participating in the next quarterly Community Networking and Education Forum for island County Youth Stakeholders. This meeting will be held on October 8<sup>th</sup> at the Oak Harbor Planned Parenthood office on Goldie Rd. There will be a briefing on the status of STIs among Island County youth, and an opportunity for representatives from concerned organizations to interact and develop cooperative efforts to reach out and provide support to the youth of the county.

## **2) Health Issues Support Efforts.**

### **a. Key Health Indicators – Community Health.**

(1) Background. The CHAB has developed a set of indicators to monitor and evaluate the health of the Island County population, which was presented to the Board at the joint meeting of the CHAB and the Board on 05 April 2005. These indicators were developed through review of data on all thirteen health categories reported in *The Health of Island County 2003*. The CHAB has adopted these indicators as a means to present information to the community, to prioritize issues and recommend policy to the Board of Health, to assist in mobilizing the community to address these issues, and to track issues and lay the groundwork for future health assessment activities by the CHAB. Maintaining the key indicators is an on-going effort and requires having updated data to evaluate progress toward achieving our goal of improving the health of Island County.

With the passage by the State Legislature of the bill based on the Governor's Blue Ribbon Commission on Health Care Costs and Access, additional emphasis will be placed on the use of indicators to measure performance of health services including public health. As performance measures and indicators are developed for this purpose, the CHAB will review its key indicators for consistency with the State-wide set. Methods for communicating the key health indicators, their value and what they tell us about the health of the community, continue to be explored.

(2) Recent Accomplishments/Progress. Recent review of the key health indicators for community health indicates that with a few exceptions the status of the underlying issues in Island County is either satisfactory, or the issues are being addressed by a CHAB Health Action Team, a partner agency or organization, or by a community board such as the Children's Commission or the ACHIEVE Team. The issues which may require further attention by CHAB are being investigated to determine whether useful actions can be undertaken by the CHAB. [The issues: (1) unlocked and loaded firearms in the home; (2) prenatal care access; and (3) smoking by pregnant women.]

Discussions have been initiated between key health indicator team members and health department staff to begin planning for the next survey of the county population as part of the national and state-level Behavioral Risk Factors Surveillance System, or BRFSS, tentatively planned for 2011. The periodic BRFSS surveys are the most cost-effective means for obtaining county-specific data for public health programs.

**b. Key Health Indicators – Environmental Health.**

(1) Background. Environmental health (*i.e.*, the effects of various factors in the environment on human health) is a central component of public health and has been part of the responsibility of the CHAB from its inception. For the last several years, grants from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) funded a separate emphasis program for environmental health (EH) issues, executed in part by a separate Island County volunteer advisory board called the Environmental Health Assessment Team (EHAT). With the cessation of the CDC grants, the functions of and some of the volunteers from the EHAT were incorporated into the CHAB. The Environmental Health Steering Committee (EHSC) was formed to ensure that efforts developed by the EHAT were continued, that EH issues within Island County continue to be monitored, and that these issues were incorporated in the periodic CHAB community health assessment process. For example, actions initiated by the EHAT have been incorporated into work being done by the Chronic Disease and Physical Activity HAT, specifically actions being taken to increase walking in daily life. One of the tasks of the EHSC is to develop a set of key health indicators focusing on environmental health factors, to complement the community health key indicators currently being used.

(2) Recent Accomplishments/Progress. The EHSC has identified an initial set of key health indicators for the Island County environment and is verifying the continuing availability of Island County specific data to ensure that trends in these indicators can be monitored over time. This set of indicators was presented by the committee to the CHAB at its last meeting in September, and will be further refined in the next few months for presentation to the Board.

**c. Review of Proposed 2010 ICHD Budget.**

(1) Background. In 2003, the Board of Health requested that the CHAB provide them a review of the Island County Health Department's proposed budget for the upcoming biennium, with updates on a continuing basis. These reviews and their recommendations have focused on the relative priorities of different programs and how they compare to the health issues identified by the CHAB during its periodic community health assessment process.

(2) Recent Accomplishments/Progress. Review of Island County Public Health's proposed budget for 2010 by a CHAB Task Force is commencing. Knowing that this is a time-constrained process, the CHAB requests the Board indicate when input from the CHAB would be most useful to them.

**3) Public Awareness, Education and Outreach Efforts.**

Planning is underway to develop the annual briefing for elected officials that the CHAB presents at its meeting in December. While this is nominally the first Tuesday of the month, the date is flexible to accommodate the busy schedules of our legislators.

**4) Briefings, Presentations and Other Information Provided to the CHAB.**

At the September CHAB meeting, the Island County Health Officer, Dr. Roger Case, briefed the CHAB on the status of pandemic influenza A (H1N1) 2009 [“novel H1N1” or “swine flu”] and the planning being done to mitigate impacts within Island County.

**5) Membership and Organizational Items.**

a. Number of positions on the CHAB that are currently vacant: 4 for North Whidbey, 3 for Central Whidbey, 3 for South Whidbey, and 1 for Camano.

b. The by-laws for the CHAB have been reviewed and selected changes to recognize current practices and address new issues have been drafted. The most noteworthy addition is the requirement that a member must either reside or work in Island County. These proposed changes have been briefed to the CHAB and are being reviewed by health department staff to ensure there are no conflicts with Island County Code. Voting will occur at the October meeting, with final balloting at the meeting if needed.

Respectfully submitted,

David A. Macys, MS, CIH, DABT  
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